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VALUES

How the problem of violence against women and children is represented in South African intervention research

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AGYW	Adolescent girls and young women
BEE	Black economic empowerment
CLEAR	Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results
COFEM	Coalition of Feminists for Social Change
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSVR	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DFID	Department for International Development
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IMAGE	Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity
IPV	Intimate partner violence
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries
MRC	Medical Research Council, South Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NICRO	National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSP	National Strategic Plan
SAPS	South African Police Service
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
UCT	University of Cape Town
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
VAC	Violence Against Children
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VPF	Violence Prevention Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WPR	What is the problem represented to be?

Summary

This research critically analysed 57 research papers that were included in the 2019 *Evidence Map: South African interventions to prevent violence against women and children*. The evidence map was produced by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the Africa Centre for Evidence, on behalf of the Violence Prevention Forum. The map contains research and evaluations of violence prevention interventions implemented in South Africa between 1990 and 2018.

The research applied Carol Bacchi's feminist policy analysis methodology that asks, 'What is the problem represented to be?' (WPR). The WPR approach was used to assess the 57 research papers in the evidence map to find out how researchers define the problem of violence, the assumptions and presuppositions that underpin the problem definition, the silences and the impact on policy and practice of how the problem is represented.

Key findings

- At least 12 different terms are used to describe the problem of violence against women and children (VAWC). How the different terms relate to, or differ from, each other is not always clear, as researchers often use terms interchangeably. For example, gender-based violence (GBV) is used interchangeably with violence against women (VAW) or intimate partner violence (IPV), and sometimes domestic violence. Most of the terms also rely on outdated gender binaries, which risk excluding gender non-conforming individuals. The challenge of having a multiplicity of terms, and inconsistency in how they are used, is that it affects how and what researchers measure and the ability of the public and policy audience to understand what the terms mean.
- There is general agreement amongst researchers testing interventions that VAWC is a serious social problem. In framing the problem, researchers emphasise different aspects of it, depending on their disciplines and the theories applied to study violence. For example, psychologists will emphasise subjectivities and personal experiences of violence; those who apply a social or systems approach will emphasise the impact of systems on individual behaviour, etc. Even those who apply a public health model – which asserts that what happens at individual, family and societal levels all impact violence – tend to focus on factors from only one or two levels. The consequence is that although multiple risk factors or drivers of violence are identified, it is difficult to see how the risk factors interface to produce violent behaviour. There is general agreement that all risk factors contribute to violence, but it remains unclear which factors are most critical to address to set South Africa on the right path to reducing levels of violence.
- Although the body of research does provide knowledge about the effectiveness of individual programmes to address a combination of risk factors for violence, there is a lack of clarity about what combination of interventions is needed, and at what 'dosage', to prevent violence more effectively. This is, arguably, one of the constraints faced by those who drafted the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-based Violence and Femicide when making decisions about what it should prioritise.
- Although most research reports and publications were prefaced with statements about how violence against women occurs across socioeconomic status, race, age and religion, it is notable that most research on the topic happens in poor black communities (African and Coloured). Despite black communities being

the focus of most studies, there is little or no reference to race and racism and their impact on communities in the studies we reviewed. The effect of focusing only on poor black communities is that it runs the risk of racialising violence. Violence becomes understood to be a problem of black people, particularly black men. This feeds into existing stereotypes and the othering of black men. Society treats violence by other males as exceptional and violence in black communities as the norm. This entrenches the notion of a violent black male that shapes how institutions deal with black men. Examples are private security or street policing committees profiling black men in 'privatised' public spaces, violent policing of black neighbourhoods, the military being deployed to police communities, or police ministers calling for a tough-on-criminals approach.

- Despite black communities being the predominant object of research, we found very few black researchers to be the authors of research papers. Most of the authors of articles relating to the assessment of violence prevention interventions were from the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand, and the Medical Research Council (MRC). No studies of interventions were conducted by the universities closest to the communities studied. The limited racial diversity in research teams suggests inequality in access to research funding and networks for publishing. Increased diversity would strengthen research in this field.
- While many studies refer to violence as having resulted from the history of state violence and institutionalised racism in South Africa, this does not seem to inform interventions. Interventions tend to focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal risk factors of violence. There is a disconnect between the complexity that is often acknowledged and presented in the introductions to studies and in their literature reviews, and the actual interventions and recommendations. The latter two tend to be much narrower than the researchers' initial understanding of the problem.
- Different forms of violence intersect. Structural violence intersects with corporeal forms of violence. The intersection between VAW and violence against children (VAC) has until very recently not been widely acknowledged. Most studies reviewed focused on either VAW or VAC.
- The studies reviewed tend to refer to victims and perpetrators as mutually exclusive binaries. Yet the categories of victim and perpetrator are not mutually exclusive. Victims of one form of violence can be perpetrators of other forms of violence. This binary makes it difficult to develop a language that allows for the comprehensive approach needed to address all the risk factors of violence in South Africa.
- We observed unresolved contestations in the research. This is particularly evident in relation to what to do with men and harmful expressions of masculinity. Should there be interventions with men? Do they work? Should interventions focus only on empowering women? Is the criminal justice system the only way to respond to violent men? These questions remain largely unanswered.
- Little to no research was found on interventions that address trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, child pornography, child trafficking, paedophilia, etc. No research focused on interventions to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace. This leaves open questions such as whether there are connections between these forms of violence and what happens within intimate relationships and in poor communities, and why there have not been interventions tested to address these forms of violence.

Recommendations

- Preventing violence and reducing its harmful consequences in society need to be prioritised. The unfolding COVID-19 pandemic threatens some of the gains made in recent years to get VAWC on the political agenda. To avoid eroding these gains, the Violence Prevention Forum (working with other partners) should consider developing a position paper that argues for the importance of continued prioritisation of violence prevention as South Africa battles the impact of COVID-19. This should include suggestions on what interventions to prioritise based on the existing evidence base. Policymakers and implementers should also be given recommendations on different combinations of interventions needed to address multiple vulnerabilities that are likely to be made worse by the pandemic.

- Different forms of violence intersect. It is not an effective strategy to try to deal with each form of violence as if it were happening in a vacuum. South Africa needs a country strategy to deal with violence broadly. The White Paper on Safety and Security is a strong starting point. However, to address VAWC it is equally important to address structural violence, including inequality, racism, etc. The Civilian Secretariat for Police and the Department of Women should ensure that efforts to implement the White Paper and the NSP, respectively, emphasise addressing some of the weaknesses in government programmes that perpetuate violence. Restoring dignity needs to be a cornerstone of government policy, be it through housing, municipal by-laws, social development funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or how the police patrol certain neighbourhoods. In addition, partnerships with communities need to be strengthened. The Civilian Secretariat needs to explore how the voice of communities will be brought to the implementation process for the 2016 White Paper on Safety and Security and ensure that the process does not privilege government and researcher perspectives. The White Paper might also be a good place to start addressing the effect of South Africa's history. Racism and racial oppression continue to divide the country; the historical trauma of apartheid has not been addressed definitively.
- Researchers (working with community-based organisations and government) need to develop frameworks that enable the country to make sense of the different intersections of violence and find a language that can be understood outside academic circles. Currently, different initiatives and efforts are running in parallel, divided by discipline or forms of violence. Efforts to end organised crime such as child pornography, trafficking for sexual exploitation, male-on-male violence, gun violence, gang violence, GBV, and VAC do not sufficiently identify complementarities and tend to focus on what divides. However, all these different initiatives aim to prevent violence or reduce harm. Perhaps this discussion can start within the ISS between different programmes.

Introduction

This research explored how South African researchers and evaluators studying interventions frame and define the problem of violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) by applying a feminist policy analysis approach developed by Carol Bacchi. This approach asks ‘What is the problem represented to be?’ (WPR), and what are the implications thereof.

The intention of this research is to provide researchers and policymakers with a bird’s-eye view of how the problem of violence against women and children (VAWC) in South Africa is being defined, researched and acted upon, and to identify challenges and opportunities.

Our data source was an evidence gap map developed in 2019 by the Institute of Security Studies (ISS), the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the Africa Centre for Evidence at the University of Johannesburg, on behalf of the Violence Prevention Forum.¹ The map contains research and evaluations of violence prevention interventions implemented in South Africa.

The way a social problem is defined directly shapes the interventions
and policies proposed to address it

The map, which used similar methods to systematic reviews to search, screen and map evidence, confirmed that VAWC is a widely researched issue in South Africa.

This research, which influences and shapes how government, policymakers and donors understand and respond to the problem, is rarely subjected to scrutiny. Researchers’ framing of violence and the implication of that framing for policy and practice is rarely examined. In our analysis, the research identified in the evidence map was systematically reviewed using Bacchi’s questioning analysis method.

The analysis was guided by six interrelated questions that examined problem representation, assumptions underlying the representation, silences and effects of the representation. The methods section below explains the approach in detail and how it was applied.

This report has four sections. The first gives the background to the project and why it is important. This is followed by a literature review to situate the research. Section three introduces the research method and process in more detail. Section four discusses the findings and explores implications for policy and practice. The report concludes with recommendations based on the findings and analysis.

Background to the project

The overall question guiding this research is: ‘How has the problem of VAW and VAC been represented in research and how has this shaped programmatic and policy responses in South Africa?’ To answer this question, the following set of questions were considered:

- How has the problem of VAW and VAC been represented in research?
- What factors shape how researchers frame VAW and VAC?
- Are there any conflicting or contradictory representations of the problem of VAW and VAC?
- What are the programmatic and policy implications of the current framing of VAW and VAC?

Why is this important?

The way a social problem is defined directly shapes the interventions and policies proposed to address it. Ways of knowing and understanding a problem shape how those responsible for responding to it act. This means that problematisation – the way a problem is defined – is central to the practice of governance because the problem definition shapes the approaches to governing it.²

Policymakers seek (or should seek) ways to govern social problems to reduce the detrimental effects to society. How they do so is influenced by what is known (or presented as knowledge) about the policy problem.

For example, when the problem of hunger is framed as a problem of access to food, food parcels may be presented as a solution. However, when hunger is understood to result from a much more complex interaction of factors that cause poverty, the solution would include interventions to address poverty, increase incomes, and reduce the cost of food, amongst other things.

Ways of knowing and understanding a problem shape how those responsible for responding to it act

Researchers and programme designers have a powerful role in shaping the way people understand social problems. What is ‘true’ and hence ‘real’ is articulated and established in the concepts and arguments researchers develop.³ Research has the power to shape realities.⁴ In this way, a researcher’s approach to generating knowledge about a particular issue can be considered a political act.⁵

The choice of what to study, how and where to study it, and what to report, is not a value-neutral process and contributes to how society comes to understand itself.⁶ Given this reality, it is important to critically analyse the process by which researchers define, conceptualise and recommend remedial interventions to government or non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

By questioning some of the ‘truths’ taken for granted about violence in South Africa, this research has generated new insights that could shape policy responses and future research by pointing to areas where there are unresolved conflicts and missing perspectives.

It is our intention for this research to inform and increase critical analysis and questioning by participants in the Violence Prevention Forum who come from government, international NGOs, community-based organisations and research institutions. How these actors speak about VAWC and advocate for its resolution impacts how society perceives women and children, and how government and donors respond in policy and resource allocation.

It is also our intention for this research to inform the research agenda that will support the implementation of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Gender-based Violence and Femicide, the White Paper on Safety and Security and other policies aimed at preventing violence.

Literature review

The extent of the problem

In South Africa, relationships and other social interactions are characterised by incidences of violence. In 2020 the South African Police Service (SAPS) reported that 21 325 people were murdered in the country.⁷ This translates to 58 people murdered daily.

Other violent crimes, as defined by the police, constitute a large proportion of total crimes reported. For example, in 2019/20, 165 494 cases of common assault – defined as direct and indirect application of force to the body of another person – were reported to the police.⁸ In the same period, 166 720 cases of assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm were also reported. In addition, 621 282 ‘contact crimes’ – crimes in which the victims are targets of violence or a property is targeted – were reported to the police.⁹

It is possible that some households/individuals were victims of more than one crime at a time. Therefore, the number cannot be taken to translate directly to the number of individuals who experienced crime. Nonetheless, considering that some of these crimes take place within households where more than one individual is a victim or witness, levels of violent encounters and resultant trauma are considerable.

In this context, it is not surprising that levels of violence experienced by women and children are also high. The South African Demographic and Health Survey found that 21% of ever-partnered women have experienced physical violence by a partner, and 8% had experienced physical violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.¹⁰

In a widely cited regional study, Gender Links found comparable rates of victimisation of women. It reported that a large proportion of men (Gauteng 78%; Limpopo 48%; Western Cape 35%; and KwaZulu-Natal 41%) admitted to having committed some form of violence against women in their lifetime.¹¹

In 2019/20 the police reported that 25 801 rape cases were opened by women. This is a decrease from a high of 33 467 in 2015/16 and 30 626 in 2018/19; however, this does not necessarily mean that there was a real decrease in incidence.¹² Reporting of sexual violence has been shown to be relatively low. Human rights organisations estimate that only one in nine cases of sexual violence is reported to the SAPS, while the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation (NICRO) suggests that only one in 20 rape cases is reported.¹³

Violence experienced by children shows comparable trends, with studies finding that one in three children in South Africa has experienced some form of violence – mostly at the hands of caregivers.¹⁴

These high levels of violence have led to South Africa often being referred to as a ‘country in crisis’¹⁵ or as having the ‘highest rates of violence against women in the world’¹⁶ and being ‘stuck in a vortex’.¹⁷ It is estimated that VAW costs South Africa R42 billion per year and VAC R238 billion per year.¹⁸

What is meant by violence against women and children?

Dwyer argues that the problem with most definitions of violence is that they are descriptive, so they attempt to say what violence is or is not. They describe the violent act or the actions of violent agents (or perpetrators), as well as the impact on the victims of violence.¹⁹ This is something also observed in our research.

Violence experienced by women is often referred to as gender-based violence (GBV), a term first coined by feminists in recognition of the fact that women experience violence because of their gender. Thus, being female

makes them vulnerable to forms of violence that are an expression of men's power over women. The concept recognises that men are more likely to be perpetrators of the violence experienced by women.²⁰

The term GBV was formally adopted in the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, an international agreement in which violence against women is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women.'²¹

The conceptualisation of violence experienced by women as GBV recognises that this form of violence has its roots in gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between males and females, among males, and among females. It happens and is sustained by patriarchy that tips the balance of power in favour of men.

While agreeing that gender inequality is an underlying cause of GBV, Mpani and Nsibandé offer a more expansive definition of GBV, as 'any harm that is perpetrated against a person's will that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person because of their gender.'²²

While acknowledging the general consensus that women are disproportionately affected by GBV, Mpani and Nsibandé argue that 'victims of Gender-Based Violence include men, women and children.'²³

It is with this expansive definition of GBV that includes other forms of gendered violence where women are not the victim that the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) disagrees, arguing for a definition that describes GBV as violence experienced by women because of their gender, therefore excluding male victims of violence, even if the violence is perpetrated because of their gender.

Mpani and Nsibandé make a distinction between GBV and VAW. They define VAW as encompassing an array of abuses targeted at women and girls at any time in their lives. This violence has its roots in gender inequality.²⁴ The inclusion of girls in this definition of VAW seems to differ from, and be in contradiction with, South African legislation that defines anyone below the age of 18 or 16 as a child.

A researcher's approach to generating knowledge about a particular issue can be considered a political act

Other concepts that are commonly used in the literature are domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV is defined as behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship.

Such behaviour includes acts of physical aggression – such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating; psychological abuse – such as intimidation, constant belittling and humiliating; forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion; and various controlling behaviours – such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movement, and restricting their access to information or assistance.²⁵

Jewkes offers a more narrowed definition of IPV, defining it as physical violence directed against a woman by a current or former husband or boyfriend. Jewkes acknowledges that the term often includes sexual violence and psychological abuse, but points out that there have been inconsistencies and contestations in conceptualisation.²⁶

The defining feature of IPV seems to be the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. It is violence that takes place between individuals who are or have been in an intimate/sexual relationship. IPV therefore would not include, for example, physical violence experienced by women in the workplace or perpetrated by a stranger. This is an important distinction when interventions are considered.

IPV is differentiated from domestic violence, a term once widely used in South Africa, which is defined by the location wherein the violence occurs and by the specific relationships between the victim and perpetrator.

South Africa's Domestic Violence Act (DVA) of 1998 offers a broad definition of domestic violence, namely as any physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse. It also includes intimidation,

harassment, stalking, damage to property, entry into the complainant's residence without consent, or any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards the complainant – where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or wellbeing of the complainant.²⁷

The term domestic violence has been used in different contexts to refer to intimate partner violence, but the concept of domestic violence is all-encompassing and includes violence experienced by children and elder abuse within the household setting.

Not only are there multiple ways that VAW and VAC are defined, but there are also inconsistencies in the definition of concepts. Jewkes, for example, has noted inconsistencies in the definition and operationalisation of IPV, which in some cases excludes all forms of violence other than physical violence.²⁸ Another area of ambiguity is whether concepts such as GBV and IPV refer only to violence when women are victims or whether the terms could be applied to violence experienced by men that is perpetrated by their female partners. The answer seems to depend on the ideological position of those who use the term. For example, Jewkes uses the term IPV as gender-specific while other researchers use a gender-neutral definition.²⁹

The NSP for GBV and femicide uses GBV to refer to all forms of violence that are gendered and does not restrict the term to violence experienced by women.

Another term used to highlight the gendered nature of violence is the broad term 'violence against women and girls' (VAWG), which encompasses IPV, domestic violence and other forms of sexual and non-sexual violence. VAWG refers to violence that is experienced by women and girls, which is often sexualised and gendered and explicitly excludes the boy child.³⁰

VAWG is often differentiated from VAWC, which includes all forms of violence experienced by children (by virtue of their age). This can include gendered forms of violence, that is, sexual violence experienced by girl children, as well as non-gendered forms of violence such as physical punishment in the home.

It is also important to note that VAWC is not a widely used concept. In South Africa, it was used in the National Plan for Action published by the Department of Social Development in 2013, and by the inter-ministerial committee and consequently in the Diagnostic Review of the State Response to VAWC in South Africa. As such, VAW and VAC have developed in parallel and there is no consensus on combining VAW and VAC³¹ or on how or why these terms might be preferable to other ways of referring to the violence experienced by children and women.

Notwithstanding this, in our research, we use the concept of VAWC to underscore the intersections of VAW and VAC. Both VAW and VAC share many risk factors – they often co-occur in the home, have common and compounding consequences through an individual lifespan, and often intersect during adolescence.³²

In this report, VAC will be used to refer to all forms of violence experienced by children, while VAW will be used to refer to all forms of violence experienced by women.

We use VAW instead of GBV because of the evolution eloquently captured by COFEM. VAW is used as an overarching concept that identifies against whom the violence is perpetrated. Other more specific concepts, such as IPV, rape, etc., are understood as forms of VAW in the same way that concepts such as spanking, corporal punishment, neglect, incest, etc. are understood as forms of VAC.

There are places in the research where VAWC is used – in instances where we are reporting on factors that cut across women and children. There are also areas in the report where the two are treated as separate concepts because most of the research that we analysed studied them separately.

Theorising violence against women and children

There are multiple ways that violence and its causes can be understood and studied. The development of theory is important in the study of violence as it helps researchers organise their thoughts. It provides a framework to bring together disparate descriptive studies to aid a comprehensive understanding of

phenomena. Theory is also important in informing interventions. The way in which researchers understand the problem and its causes determines the kind of interventions they propose.

Lau provides a useful categorisation of theories relating to VAW:³³

- **Psychoanalytical:** Violence is explained as intrapersonal in psychoanalytical theories. It is a result of processes internal to the individual or a protective response to external factors such as threatened abandonment, threatened identity, etc.
- **Biological and psychobiological:** Like psychoanalytical theories, these theories focus on individual factors to explain the causes of violent behaviour. These include structural brain damage, genetic abnormalities and hormone levels. This set of theories has been heavily criticised as being inadequate and as pathologising male behaviours.³⁴
- **Feminist:** While there is no single feminist theory, what characterises feminist theories of VAW is recognition of the power imbalance between men and women. Patriarchy is a key concept in feminist theory. It refers to the global system that privileges men over women, the subsequent gendered socialisation of boys and girls, and social constructions of what are ideal, or acceptable, traits for men and women. This is identified as a contributor to the male tendency to use violence against females and the acceptance of that violence by females.³⁵ Therefore, as much as individual men act violently, violence is understood as systemic and structural.
- **Social learning:** Through this lens, violence is a learned behaviour mostly associated with early experiences of childhood. Concepts such as 'cycle of violence' or 'intergenerational transmission of violence' are used when violence is described as learned behaviour.
- **Sociological theory:** These theories focus on violence as a result of social inequalities and class disparities. Violence is a response to exclusion, disenfranchisement and isolation.
- **Systems theory (including the 'ecological model'):** Within this understanding, violent behaviour is an interactive system where patterns of relating within the family or social context interact with societal factors. Thus, violent behaviour is shaped and in turn shapes social, cultural, familial and individual factors.

None of these theories is by itself adequate to explain why violence happens³⁶ or to offer effective strategies for preventing it from happening. Also, for each of these theoretical frameworks, credible criticisms question their epistemological and ontological foundations.

Gibbs et al. argue that even the ecological model has been inadequate to move the sector forward because of its inability to demonstrate how the different levels interact. In part, this is because there are no conditions that are causally linked to violent behaviour. Instead, there are risk factors or contributory factors that are associated with heightened levels of violence.³⁷ For example, alcohol and drug use are associated with the perpetration of violence and victimisation, but consumption of alcohol does not necessarily cause individuals to be violent.

Responding to VAWC

Responses to violence are also framed in different ways. The ways seem to be influenced and shaped by disciplines and how the problem of violence is primarily understood. Here we expand on the two most prominent organising frameworks for responding to violence.

Criminological approach

In its broadest sense, criminology can be defined as an organised way of thinking about crime, criminals and how to control crime.³⁸ As with other disciplines, there are multiple theoretical approaches within the criminological landscape.

Dekeseredy speaks of orthodox and critical perspectives on crime and violence. The orthodox perspective is more concerned with the control of crime and violence, while the critical perspectives are concerned with

understanding the context that gives rise to crime and violence and are opposed to incarceration and other punishment approaches to controlling crime and violence.³⁹

Different forms of VAW and VAC are criminal acts, meaning they are punishable under penal law. In South Africa, criminal justice responses to VAW and VAC have focused on instituting legislative reforms to protect women and children. These include effective use of protection orders, special sexual offences courts, the establishment of family and child units within the police to handle cases, training of police officers and minimum sentencing for certain forms of VAWC.

The challenge with a criminological approach to violence is rooted in the discipline's focus on crime and the perpetrator, and on how the criminal justice system deters, apprehends and incarcerates perpetrators. The failure of criminal justice to reduce and deter crime and violence, particularly VAWC, has been documented.⁴⁰

Agostino, among others, has provided a strong challenge to the colonialist, Western discipline of criminology.⁴¹ His argument is that criminology has focused on the perpetrators of certain kinds of crime, and their perpetration, as a way of avoiding dealing with the structural conditions that give rise to violence. In so doing it has emphasised certain forms of harm over others. For example, exploitative and extractive industries are not regarded as criminal, even though the harm they cause to individuals and the environment may be considerable.

Public health approach

From the 1990s onwards, there was a shift from a criminal justice focus to a public health approach to violence.⁴² In 1996 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared violence a major public health issue, which was firmly entrenched with the publication of the *2002 World Review on Violence and Health*.⁴³

An important aspect of this shift is that the public health definition of violence is broader and includes acts that result in psychological harm that might not be considered criminal.

The public health perspective includes acts involving deprivation and neglect, which under a conventional criminal justice system usually only apply to children or vulnerable adults who are severely deprived and/or neglected by their caretakers.⁴⁴ This approach recognises that risk factors for, and protective factors against, violence exist at the individual, relational, community and societal level. It has been useful for understanding the risk factors associated with both VAW and VAC.

The INSPIRE framework – a WHO technical package to help countries respond to VAC with evidence-based interventions – has been influential in shaping debates about VAC. The seven strategies for ending VAC are: implementation and enforcement of laws; norms and values; safe environments; parent and caregiver support; income and economic strengthening; response and support services; and education and life skills.

The framework offers a comprehensive understanding of the risk factors for VAC and interventions to mitigate those risk factors.⁴⁵

Recently the WHO published the RESPECT framework to help countries respond to the problem of VAW by comprehensively applying the public health approach.

The RESPECT framework contains a set of action-oriented steps that enables policymakers and health implementers to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate interventions and programmes using seven strategies to prevent VAW. The strategies are: strengthening relationship skills; empowering women; ensuring services; reducing poverty; making environments safe; preventing child and adolescent abuse; and transforming attitudes, beliefs, and norms.⁴⁶

In short, there is a great deal of overlap between the two strategies. These frameworks offer well-packaged response kits for policymakers and implementers. The extent to which they shape the way researchers engage with their context and frame the problem will be explored.

Research methods

Explaining WPR: What is the problem represented to be?

Fundamental to WPR is the notion that problems are not self-evident, i.e. they do not exist objectively but are conceptualised, constructed, studied and governed. Bacchi states that ‘problems’ do not sit outside politics and policy (or research) processes waiting to be discovered.⁴⁷ Instead, they are produced in a specific site and context of existing power relations as problems of particular kinds within the research, policy proposals and policies adopted.

Put differently, every policy proposal contains within it an implicit representation of what the problem is purported to be.⁴⁸ By extension, every research process contains an implicit representation and conceptualisation of a problem as researchers perceive it. Thus ‘what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change).’⁴⁹

Problematization within the WPR approach does not deny the existence of an undesirable social condition like violence. Rather, it calls attention to how the problem is defined and the material consequences of that definition.

Accordingly, the WPR approach argues that it is important for social actors to recognise that many factors shape how they (and society) come to understand and act on a problem, beyond what can be observed of the problem itself. As demonstrated in the review of definitions of violence above, in the process of conceptualisation and definition, different perspectives, interests and institutions compete for attention. Often some perspectives are excluded as a consequence of ‘boundary judgements’.⁵⁰

The WPR framework calls for attention to be paid to the importance of power and to the effects of power that are at the centre of how problems are defined and acted on. Thus, while the WPR analysis focuses on how problems are spoken of (discourse analysis), it is primarily concerned with ‘the outcomes and material implications that arise when phenomena are constituted in particular ways as particular kinds of “problems”.’⁵¹

Bacchi defines the WPR approach as a resource, or tool, intended to facilitate the critical interrogation of public policies. By asserting that ‘no concept or category is accepted as value-free and uncontested,’ the WPR approach disrupts the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of all policy proposals, no matter how ‘progressive’ they may seem.⁵²

Marshall further suggests that the WPR framework should be seen as both a mode of thinking and a form of analysis. As a mode of thinking, the WPR approach moves from ‘problem solving’ to ‘problem questioning’, challenging the assumptions of neutrality, technicality and responsiveness that inform policy research.⁵³ It provides a way to think of research and resultant policy as powerfully productive and political.

Analytically, the WPR offers a flexible questioning methodology to interrogate the problematisation of social issues. Analysis thus begins with the selection of text(s) within which the policy proposal is articulated (or, as is the case in this research, a research report/journal article), and works to identify the problem representation from what is proposed.⁵⁴ From the problem representation, the framework allows one to

delve deeper into presuppositions, silences and effects. Bacchi proposes an analytical and methodical process guided by six interrogative questions:⁵⁵

- What is the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
- How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
- What is left unproblematic in the 'problem' representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' have been thought about/articulated differently?
- What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
- How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

Using the WPR in this research

The traditional application of the WPR has been in policy analysis. The methodological implications are that the analysis begins from a defined policy and then works backwards to interrogate the framing of the problem using the six questions presented above.

We applied it slightly differently in this study. Here the focus is not on a policy, but on the body of research into interventions to address risk factors of VAWC.

The focus of our analysis is not on specific policy, but on written research outputs published by a variety of researchers who represent various research or academic institutions or think tanks. This is in line with the methodologically flexible approach of the WPR framework.

Since its development, the WPR approach has been extended beyond its original intention in terms of the content, context and form of material analysed. Indeed, Archibald has argued that this approach should be applied extensively in evaluation and evaluative work.⁵⁶

While evaluators/researchers may not always be involved in programme design, they often have to engage with how the programme defined the problem. This problem definition can shape the programme response and therefore the evaluative process.⁵⁷

Bacchi also said that the WPR 'approach as a mode of critical practice is also to highlight the politics of research, to recognise that research methods and reports are by no means neutral but rather are always political acts with social effects.'⁵⁸ Marshall provides a useful example that comes close to what our research intended. Marshall used the WPR approach to study how the World Bank shaped discourse around the 'problem' of disability and the material consequences of how nation states came to understand the problem and acted on it. In this case, the unit of analysis was not a national policy, but a set of policy proposals by the World Bank's researchers, policy advisors, etc.

Research methods and reports are not neutral.
They are always political acts with social effects

Similarly, Vidor et al. applied the WPR in a systematic review of the literature to find out how the problem of gender parity in physics and physics education was represented and the assumptions about gender that underlie research.⁵⁹

Bacchi has indeed suggested that the WPR approach should be extended to material generated by academics and professionals that influences policy. This is because, as those working in development would attest, research/

evaluation provides ‘bridge discourses, which mediate the relations between social movements and the state.’⁶⁰ Researchers make recommendations and guide the choices of policymakers and programme implementers.

Although previous research found that the direct implementation of research recommendations (instrumental use) in policy is often limited, the conceptual use of evidence is extensive. With the growth of evidence-informed policymaking, researchers are seeking more influence over policy and practice.⁶¹ Thus, concepts generated in academic research are indeed likely to shape policy responses in one way or another. This is clearly the case in the NSP and the 2016 White Paper on Safety and Security.

In addition, by engaging in public dialogue through writing opinion pieces in newspapers or appearing on the news (television or radio) to talk about specific research or share their knowledge to help people make sense of events/trends in society, researchers are social analysts and shape popular thought on an issue. Thus research, in a way, is both an extension of, and precursor to, policymaking. Hence the WPR approach is applicable to this type of text.

Operationalising the WPR

The approach taken in this study was systematic, iterative and methodical, guided by the six interrogative questions Bacchi proposed. In addition, a review of the literature was undertaken to contextualise violence experienced by women and children in South Africa, how the government has responded to it and some of the challenges observed.

Four researchers worked on the project. Matodzi Amisi was the principal investigator, conceptualised the research and did most of the writing. Tom Archibald, a methods specialist, provided guidance on methods. Kudakwashe Vanyoro was the lead researcher in the data extraction and contributed to the analysis; Muofhe Mulondo, a junior researcher, extracted the descriptive data.

Sampling

The first practical question related to sampling or the selection of studies. In this regard, there were two issues to consider: sample size and the alignment of each study with policy and practice. First, 14 000 (the total number of studies screened in the evidence map) was too large a record to carry out deep analysis of each literature piece. The contribution of the WPR as an analytical approach is in digging deeper to ask questions and see what is not said. Covering too many studies would have led to a shallow analysis that would probably work against the principles of the WPR approach.

The direct implementation of research recommendations in policy is often limited, but the conceptual use of evidence is extensive

Therefore, our analysis was limited to the 57 studies included in the final evidence map (Chart 1). These are the studies that researched the effect of programmatic or policy interventions on victimisation and perpetration of VAW and VAC.

Since this study does not focus on policy per se, it was important that the research should get a sense of what effects are produced by different representations of the problem. This was possible because the studies included in the map researched specific interventions. Interventions were defined broadly. In this map, they refer to any action, programme or policy to alter the social conditions that perpetuate violence. They included:

- Programmes that were intentionally designed to prevent violence and that were mostly initiated by researchers.
- Government policies and programmes.
- NGO-led programmes that aimed to reduce the risk factors for violence.

The research papers in the map were organised and given a reference number for ease of reference. The reference numbers were from VAWC1 to VAWC57.

Data extraction

Standard descriptive data about each study was collected using a predefined tool designed with Google form. Each study was treated as a 'respondent' with a file name ranging from VAWC 1 to VAWC 57. Data collected included the following:

- Type of publication
- Where it was published
- When it was published
- Where the intervention was implemented
- Authors' names and institutional affiliation
- Concepts used to describe VAW or VAC.

The qualitative extraction employed an open-ended tool with the six questions Bacchi proposed:

- What is the 'problem'? (What is it represented to be in the study, in framing the 'why' of the study and research questions asked?)
- What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
- How has this representation of the 'problem' come about? (That is, checking the literature presented in the study to see who are referenced, how they are referenced, and any worldview/political ideologies that come through, etc.)
- What is left unproblematic in the problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' have been thought about/articulated differently? (Also checking for perspectives – whose voices are represented and whose are left out.)

Chart 1: Evidence map



- What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’? (This could be in recommendations made or any suggestions on how the problem can be addressed.)
- How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The qualitative data extraction started with reading each paper in detail and highlighting relevant parts of the text that could be used to answer the six questions. This exercise focused on identifying research questions, key terms and concepts, binaries, assumptions, causal explanations, discipline, theoretical frameworks, referencing and suggested solutions, etc.

Once these aspects of the text had been identified, the text was either paraphrased in the extraction tool or, where necessary, captured verbatim through excerpts/quotes that could be used to shape the narrative of each of the transcripts such that the data could be analysed thematically.

Data extraction was followed by the identification and definition of categories and themes. Finally, the most important categories that could be used to respond to the six questions were incorporated.

Once this process was complete, the contents of all the transcripts were synthesised into one master document under the respective themes, regardless of salience. This allowed the researchers to develop familiarity with the content and themes covered in each text. The final process was an analysis of the master document, identifying the most salient studies under each theme.

Limitations

The application of the WPR as carried out in this study is relatively novel. Applying the WPR approach to a large volume of documents comes with limitations. Firstly, the six questions had to be asked in relation to 57 studies and in each of them, the answer could be different. It was not always possible to reconcile the different answers. This made developing a clear narrative for some of the questions difficult, and where this was the case it is acknowledged.

Secondly, when reading this report, it is important to note that it is limited to the 57 studies included in the map. They are not representative of all research in the sector. Lastly, our study also relied on what is reported in the papers reviewed. Answers to questions that require insights into how and why researchers made certain choices, for example, or of research focus or questions are limited to what can be inferred from what is reported in the papers.

Findings

Here we present descriptive information about the studies reviewed. This includes information about who funded the research and who authored the publications. This is followed by a presentation of the findings, responding to the main research question, which is 'how the problem of VAWC is defined'. This is presented using Bacchi's six questions.

Who is doing research on VAW and VAC in South Africa?

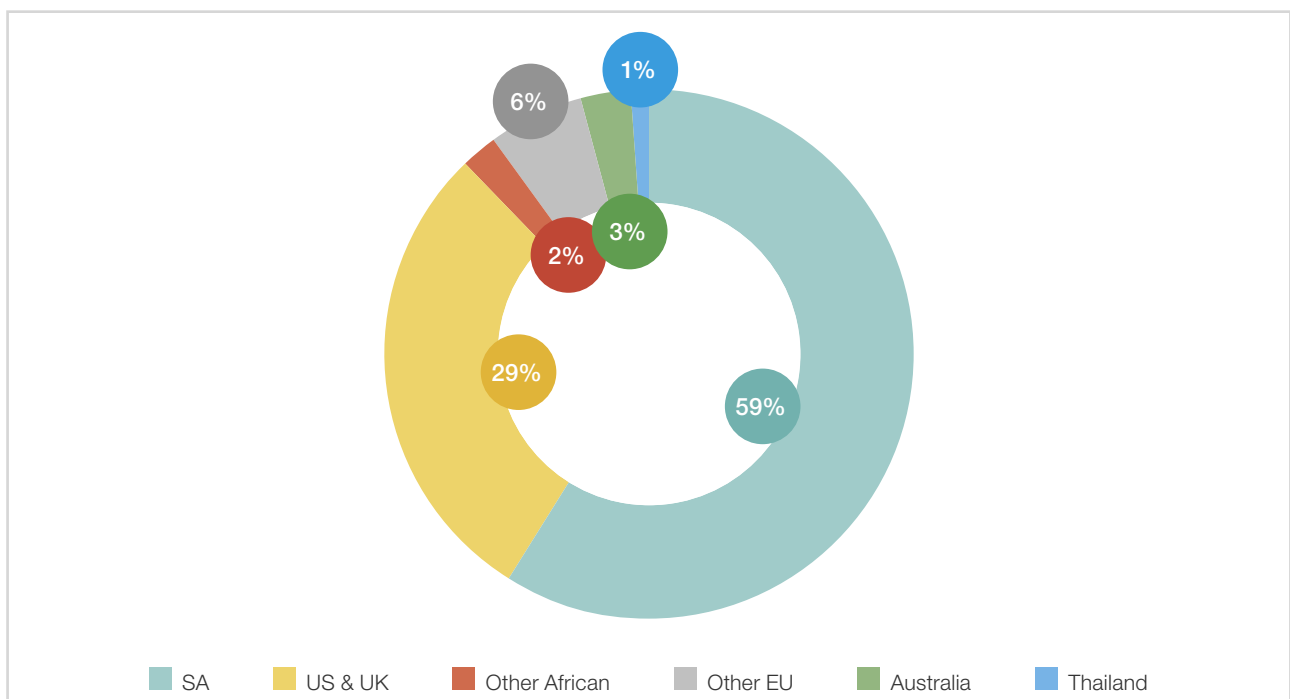
We found that 80% of authors of articles about interventions to address VAW and/or VAC are affiliated with academic institutions. Most of the authors are affiliated with South African institutions (59% of the authors), but 29% were affiliated with universities in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). Authors from other African universities were represented in only 2% of the articles.

We found a great degree of collaborative writing. Only 8.8% of the papers were single-author publications, and most of these were not peer-reviewed journal articles. Papers with single authors were either policy briefs or research reports published by think tanks or research institutions.

We found minimal collaboration between researchers in South Africa and those in other African countries. Co-authors were more likely to be from the UK and the US than elsewhere in Africa.

There was also no evidence of collaboration between South African researchers and researchers in countries with comparable contexts such as India, Brazil or Mexico. This could reflect the skewed

Chart 2: Countries where authors are based



political economy of knowledge generation. Most English language and well-ranked academic journals are based in the US and UK and most of the research reported on in the field of VAWC is funded by UK- and US-based donors.

Of the authors affiliated with South African universities, the University of Cape Town (UCT) was the most represented. A total of 24 papers had authors affiliated with UCT. This was followed by the South African Medical Research Council (MRC), which had authors in 10 papers, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) with authors in eight papers, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal with authors in four papers.

A glaring omission from the body of knowledge is research contributions from the so-called previously disadvantaged universities – University of Venda, University of Limpopo, University of Fort Hare, etc. This is despite most interventions being tested in rural areas, informal settlements and townships. These areas, because of apartheid laws that relegated black communities to underdeveloped and underserved areas, are likely to be closer to the universities established to serve those population groups.

Contributions from the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), which is meant to be a leading statutory body on social sciences research, were conspicuously absent.

Where is the research published?

Since most authors are university-based academics, it is not surprising that 89% of the publications were in peer-reviewed journals. Most of the journals were in the health sciences, while the few in the social sciences were mostly in the field of psychology. Fifty-two per cent of the articles were in international journals – mostly based in the US and UK – while 48% were national publications (both journals and reports).

Local publications included those self-published (but also peer-reviewed) by research institutes such as the Institute for Security Studies, and the Children's Institute. There were no reports or articles by government institutions. This could be because the studies included in the map involved the testing of interventions, and such evaluations tend to be commissioned to researchers/evaluators outside of government. Most of the articles about the evaluation of interventions or programmes to address VAWC are targeted at an academic audience. This suggests that this knowledge is not easily accessible to non-university-based audiences such as practitioners, policymakers and NGO researchers.

This is not a surprising finding, since university-based researchers' and academics' incentives for career progression are tied to academic publishing. Conducting research and publishing one's findings, famously captured in the mantra 'publish or perish', is one of the central universal traditions in academic practice. It has been found to work against public engagement in Africa.⁶²

Who is funding research on VAWC interventions?

We identified 55 funders of programmes and published research. Several research studies had multiple sponsors/funders. There were 29 references to South African funders, including the National Research Foundation (NRF) (mentioned in six papers), the South African MRC (five papers) and the DG Murray Trust.

US-based funders, including those who might have offices in South Africa, were acknowledged as funders in 21 papers, while the UK, specifically the Department for International Development⁶³ (DFID), was referenced in 16 papers. Other European funders, including the European Union (EU), Sweden and the Netherlands, were identified as funders in 16 papers.

In summary, most research on interventions to address VAWC is supported by international donors. It will become clear that international agencies have been influential in shaping how the problem is being understood, as well as in the interventions that are being tested.

What is the problem?

Concepts used to define the problem

An important element in the definition of an issue is the concepts used to describe it. We identified 12 different terms used in research papers to refer to different forms of violence experienced by women, including rape, physical violence, emotional violence, and the overarching terms VAW and GBV. In most cases, the terms are used together or interchangeably.

The most-used terms were 'physical violence', 'emotional violence', 'GBV', 'sexual harassment', 'violence against women', and 'abuse'. 'Child abuse', 'sexual violence', and 'neglect' were the most-used terms in references to violence experienced by children.

While knowledge is dynamic and evolves – as do the terms and concepts used to define problems – the existence and use of multiple, often overlapping, terms in relation to how violence is experienced by different groups may cause confusion. This may negatively impact the development of a shared understanding of the problem, and how it should be responded to.

Framing used to explain violence

The problem of violence and violence against women is variously framed. The dominant frames identified in the analysis include that these forms of violence result from: 'unsafe' places; psychosocial factors; hegemonic masculinity; the interaction of risk factors at different levels; absent and ineffective regulatory mechanisms and systems; alcohol and other drug use; and disempowerment.

Framing VAWC as a problem of unsafe places

Two studies framed the problem of VAWC in South Africa as one of 'unsafe' places. One article, VAWC 1, is about the safety of girls in schools. The researchers explore how girls perceive and negotiate the dangers and risks associated with the use of toilets. They frame the problem of sexual violence in South African schools as arising at the interface of gender and sanitation owing to the risks associated with school toilets in the country. This reading suggests that violence is enabled by poor infrastructure because it takes place in 'unsafe' places such as toilets. The second, VAWC 23, frames violence against women as a major global health issue linked to sanitation. This work is situated in recent observations by development and human rights organisations that inadequate local sanitation facilities are a key driver of women's risk of physical or sexual assault, where travel to and from toilets exposes them to waiting perpetrators of violence.

Framing VAWC in terms of a cycle of violence

Some researchers frame the problem of VAWC in South Africa as a psychosocial issue because of the impact it has on those who experience it. They tend to refer to the effects of violence other than physical, considering its long-term psychosocial, psychological and developmental effects. This was observed in VAWC 2, VAWC 3, VAWC 22, VAWC 54 and VAWC 20. VAWC 54 also emphasises the cycle of violence that results from children's early exposure to violence.

VAWC 52 and VAWC 53 frame the physical punishment of children as a cyclical consequence of IPV. The studies draw on evidence indicating that women who experience IPV are more likely to use physical punishment against their own children, who in turn are more likely to have abusive relationships later in their own lives, driving an intergenerational cycle of violence.

VAWC 9 makes linkages between childhood experiences and adult perpetration of VAW. Researchers who apply this framing emphasise the intersections of VAW and VAC, and they also seem to aim to transcend the notion of violence as a criminal activity.

Framing VAWC as a problem of hegemonic masculinity

Some of the studies frame VAW as a problem of hegemonic masculinity, although conceptualisation of the term varies. For example, VAWC 4 reflects on the patriarchal and rape cultures that enable sexual violence at institutions of higher learning. The problem of GBV is framed as an issue of male domination over female bodies. Within this framing, the rape culture at universities is represented as men's sexual assault on women's bodies, as well as a political use of violence that regulates and punishes women in order to maintain patriarchal power relations.

Sexual assault and violence are thus framed as 'male strategies' that maintain women's subordination in the home and contribute to women feeling uncomfortable or unsafe in the public sphere. A similar framing is used in VAWC 8, VAWC 17, VAWC 21, VAWC 57 and VAWC 5. Among those who use this framing, there is also an acknowledgement that hegemonic masculinity is harmful to men.

Framing VAWC as a public health problem

We found several studies that framed VAWC as a problem because of its negative public health implications. In 20 of the 57 papers that were reviewed, violence was defined as a public health issue. For example, VAWC 7 observes that dating violence is known to be widespread among adolescents and is a public health issue because of the health consequences for those involved.

Research that applied this frame when studying sexual violence also tended to frame sexual violence as a problem because of its association with the onset of sexual activity and consequently with sexually transmitted infections (STIs), particularly HIV.

Others, like the authors of VAWC 8, see violence as a problem because it is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality globally among women who experience it. Yet others problematise the potential 'downstream' consequences, ranging from loss of life, physical disability and hospitalisation to HIV infection, and emotional and psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety.

VAWC 31, VAWC 32, VAWC 36, VAWC 39, VAWC 40 and VAWC 43 frame sexual violence and IPV as a problem because it increases the risk of STIs, including HIV, among women. VAWC 58 frames violence against pregnant women as a public health issue because it has adverse effects on the health of the mother and baby. The study cites research showing that IPV during or around pregnancy is associated with many adverse health outcomes for the pregnant woman and her child. This is due to both direct trauma and the physiological effects of stress from current or past violence that can impact foetal growth and development.

Framing VAWC as a problem of absent and ineffectual regulatory mechanisms and systems

A few of the researchers frame the problem of VAC in South Africa as a legislative and systemic issue. VAWC 10 frames the problem of firearm injuries as a problem of regulation. It acknowledges the link between the availability of firearms and injuries to children and argues that the only way to reduce these injuries is by prevention through enforcing firearm control legislation, specifically the Firearms Control Act of 2004.

In this sense, the problem is represented not from the perspective of people committing violence, but rather how the absence of legislation increases the availability of firearms and therefore the likelihood that firearms will be used against children.

VAWC 53 frames the problem of child abuse as a failure of child protection services that ought to reduce the risk of trauma to children and break the intergenerational cycle of violence.

VAWC 50 attributes the problem of GBV in the country to inadequate state funding and the negative impact that has on GBV programming. This results in unequal power relations between civil society organisations (CSOs) and the state and donors, and often a mismatch between donor and CSO priorities. The authors posit that GBV programming would improve if these issues were addressed, increasing the likelihood of programmes being effective.

Framing VAC as a problem of 'inconsistent parenting'

Six studies on VAC frame the problem as an issue of 'inconsistent parenting'. In these studies (VAWC 13, VAWC 15, VAWC 19, VAWC 33, VAWC 37 and VAWC 42), children's experiences of violence perpetrated by parents/caregivers, or their vulnerability to violence in other contexts, are seen as a consequence of inconsistent parenting, poor-quality caregiver-child relationships and a lack of parental supervision.

Some articles use concepts such as 'poor parenting', which seems to place judgement on parents/caregivers, while later studies seem to replace this with 'inconsistent parenting', which appears to place emphasis on the parenting style or approach.

Framing VAW as a problem of alcohol and other drug use

Two studies frame the problem of VAW in South Africa as being related to alcohol and other drug use. VAWC 16 frames the use of alcohol and drugs as a problem because women who do this are more vulnerable to IPV and other forms of violence than the general population. Addressing the issue of alcohol and drug use among women can thus lead to positive outcomes as they become less exposed to risks.

VAWC 46 represents hazardous or harmful drinking as a problem because it leads to physical and other forms of violence. Considering that the connection between alcohol misuse and violence in South Africa is heavily debated, it is interesting that not many studies explored the effect of interventions to reduce substance use on violence perpetration and victimisation. This may be because of the difficulty of having control groups, as this would require collaboration with government regulators and enforcers.

Framing VAW as a problem of financial disempowerment

Some researchers frame VAW in South Africa as a problem of financial disempowerment. The framing of VAWC 25 and VAWC 26 is that VAW is about women's disempowerment (lack of control over resources and collective action) and how poverty leaves women vulnerable to violence. Both papers were presenting findings about the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) to address women's economic disempowerment.

Binary perspectives emerging in how the problem is framed

The researchers' framing of the problem of VAWC reflects several binary perspectives. In studies looking at VAC, there is the boys/girls binary. Girls are often presented as victims and boys as perpetrators. The victimhood of boys is minimised (or not discussed) when there is a focus on sexual violence, to which girls are considered more vulnerable. While both girl and boy children are sexually abused, studies like VAWC 54 note that more girls than boys report sexual abuse.

The second binary predominant in VAC studies is that of mother(caregiver)-child. When violence is perpetrated by a caregiver against a child, mothers and caregivers are often depicted as a threat to the child and the child as needing protection from the caregiver. This binary often results when a child-rights lens is applied.

At the same time, as noted in the literature review, VAW and VAC intersect and often co-occur. This raises questions about the usefulness of the compartmentalisation of VAW and VAC and using the language of perpetrator and victim, particularly where mothers/caregivers could act in violent ways as a result of exposure to VAW.

The victim-perpetrator binary is the most prevalent binary in the studies addressing VAW. Our analysis identified 42 papers from the sample that make use of this binary. In most cases, the binary carries the assumption that women and girls are innocent victims while men and boys are perpetrators.

One study, VAWC 6, challenges the framing of gender violence as a problem of violent masculinities and the framing of femininities as homogenous and passive/without their own forms of violence. The authors criticise the tendency of girls in developing countries or poor communities to be presented as innocent victims without agency, rather than complicit with gender positioning within their school context. However, this framing is not common.

What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the problem?

This question was difficult to answer as the studies were undertaken at different times in the 20 years covered by the evidence map. However, an important observation from the articles analysed is the weight given to poverty and deprivation as a conducive environment for violence; gender inequality as the main contributor to VAW; and caregiver-child (including teacher-child) relationships that are formative in ways that influence violent outcomes.

Gender inequality

In several studies, the underlying presupposition is that gender inequality is the root cause of violence against women. These articles focus on gender and unequal power relations between genders within relationships, homes and society to explain why violence happens, is tolerated and ineffectively addressed.

An illustrative case is VAWC 7, which uses gender norms to explain the high perpetration rate of dating violence among male adolescents. The authors argue that societal perceptions of male and female roles affect adolescents' dating behaviours. In many African societies, pre-marital sex is permissible for males, and showing virility is a desirable masculine attribute. On the other hand, females are socialised to be conservative and passive when it comes to sexual intercourse. This is used to represent the problem of dating sexual violence as emanating from inequitable gender norms in relation to sexuality.

These articles took a heteronormative approach and the experiences of other gendered individuals or groups were not mentioned. The focus on gender relations and culture as a mediator of relations between genders has been criticised as being too Eurocentric and narrow as a frame to understand violence. This is because such framing inadequately grapples with the interface between individual experiences and different systems of oppression such as colonisation, racism and capitalism.

By essentialising culture as the genesis and cause of gender inequality, which is seen as a precursor to VAWC, research inadvertently construct African (black) women and children as passive victims, denied status as active participants in transforming their communities.⁶⁴

Poverty and deprivation

In the manner in which the problem is framed, the context of deprivation is presented as the primary predictor of VAC and VAW. In such cases, the authors work from existing empirical research that draws these connections.

For example, VAWC 3 presupposes that maternal mental health challenges are linked to specific contexts (low- and middle-income countries). VAWC 11, VAWC 12, VAWC 13 and VAWC 28 argue that children in poor communities are more likely to experience violence. VAWC 34 maintains that adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) living in communities with higher levels of collective efficacy have lower incidences of physical IPV. In VAWC 28, the author shows that urban informal settlements are associated with higher rates of IPV and the attendant vulnerability to HIV infection.

However, the relationship between poverty and violence needs problematisation, as the mechanisms that connect poverty/deprivation and violence, as well as the methods used to establish these connections, are not fully explored.⁶⁵

One of the key assumptions made by researchers is the generalisability of the experiences of poor communities. In VAWC 11, VAWC 12 and VAWC 13, one community is considered representative of other communities that are similar by virtue of the class and race of the population.

There is an implicit assumption that race and class are the primary and most significant characteristics of the populations in question, and therefore that findings from one context of deprivation can be generalised to others.

There is also an underlying assumption that it is necessary to make impoverished communities the focus of research, which can easily give salience to a discourse that portrays poor communities as problematic and disguises other equally harmful conditions in less impoverished communities.

Focusing on socioeconomic conditions as the ‘only’ factor for consideration when sampling also seems to rule out the mediating role individual attributes and agency may play in a similar low-resource context.

The centrality of the caregiver-child relationship

The centrality of quality caregiver-child relationships as a moderator for violent outcomes underpins several studies on VAC. Drawing on existing evidence, these studies presuppose that caregiver-child (including teacher-child) relationships are formative and therefore important points of intervention to reduce violence.

This we found, for example, in studies that linked adolescent risk-taking behaviours and inadequate parental supervision; early insecure attachment and later childhood behavioural problems; parental abandonment and juvenile sexual violence perpetration; and parenting skills during adolescence and child maltreatment, among others.

These studies begin with the premise that children who experience inconsistent parenting – including unsupervised care, inconsistent rules, use of physical punishment, and lack of recognition of the children’s emotional needs – experience increased vulnerability to violence perpetration and victimisation.

How has this representation of the problem come about?

Representation of institutions and ideas

To explore what informs problem framing in the studies considered, we analysed the citations in each article.

The WHO, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other international development agencies were featured extensively in the 57 articles. There was also wide referencing of South African literature.

It is evident that global institutions play a significant role in shaping how the problem of VAWC is represented in South African research. This is apparent from the strong influence of the public health approach to violence, championed by the WHO.

However, there was little critical engagement with the theories, normative views or underlying ideologies promoted by these institutions. They are applied uncritically, and their universality seems unchallenged.

In addition, some of the research was informed by studies carried out in the global North. Twelve of the studies begin with reference to evidence that exists in the global North or high-income countries and position their research as important for testing the applicability of Northern/Western interventions in South Africa.

An illustrative case is VAWC 11, which notes that there are no known studies that have tested the effectiveness of child abuse prevention programmes for adolescents in low- or middle-income countries. Similarly, VAWC 27 observes that most trials of forced sex interventions have been conducted in the US or other high-income countries, with no rigorous intervention trials in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

Theoretical frameworks used to support problem framing

Not all the research papers considered in our study explicitly referred to a theoretical framework.

Those that did include:

- VAWC 39, which uses a feminist perspective and Heise’s ecological framework that identifies VAW as being associated with a complex array of individual, domestic, community and social factors
- VAWC 4, which also applies a feminist approach
- VAWC 24, which applies Ungar’s social ecology of resilience theory
- VAWC 25, which applies a community psychology lens
- VAWC 7, which uses Bandura’s social cognitive theory
- VAWC 34, which uses social disorganisation theory

- VAWC 38, which uses the integrated model for behaviour change
- VAWC 44, which uses Kleinian psychoanalytic theory
- VAWC 48, which uses Lempert's stages of coping with abuse, staying/leaving patterns
- VAWC 52, which uses social norms theory
- VAWC 54, which uses a socio-ecological approach
- VAWC 57, which applies Campbell and Cornish's theoretical framework for understanding social contexts that shape project outcomes.

Intersectionality was explicitly applied as a theoretical framework in one study, VAWC 9, although other studies, such as those applying social learning theory (VAWC 12), could also be considered to be looking at the intersectionality of VAW and VAC without necessarily calling their framework such.

In some instances, researchers referred to the theoretical framework of the intervention they were evaluating without explicitly using one themselves. For example, VAWC 27 stated that the 'Let Us Protect Our Future' intervention was based on social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behaviour. VAWC 28 also noted that the 'Creating Futures' intervention was located within a 'sustainable livelihoods' framework. The same is found in VAWC 36, VAWC 37, VAWC 40, VAWC 57 and VAWC 58.

This reveals the researchers' reluctance to go beyond the original ideas encapsulated in the programme being researched/evaluated, making it difficult to distinguish between the study and the interventions in ways that allow for their further problematisation.

We found that the problem definition is likely to be shaped by a researcher's discipline or the programme's theory of change. We observed minimal participation by the communities that are studied in determining how the issue is framed and what questions to ask. Even the justifications for why the research is needed rarely speak from the perspectives of the women and children researched. The latter could, of course, reflect a bias in that the majority of papers analysed were published in academic journals.

What is left unproblematic in the problem representation?

Policy implementation weaknesses

Most studies are silent about the serious challenges in the implementation of VAWC-related policies and legislation, or the challenges related to the implementation of all public policies in South Africa. Few studies focus on programme implementation or included policy implementation in the analysis.⁶⁶ Though some do recognise that implementation capacity is limited in most national and provincial departments, this is not a theme adequately considered in the research reviewed.

Not enough attention is paid to how this is a factor in why previous efforts in the country have not reduced violence, or that it should be factored into programmes that are designed and tested by researchers. Only two of the studies acknowledge the dilemma of drafting more policies in the hope of achieving social change and transformation. VAWC 50 problematises changing global policy and its negative impact on the achievement of gender equality. VAWC 52 problematises the purported efficacy of policy and legislation in addressing violence. However, even then researchers do not investigate the reasons behind weaknesses with policy implementation.

Silences on race

Race and how it shapes relations and experiences is not openly discussed in the studies analysed, despite references from time to time to the race of the research respondents or of the community where the programme was tested.

The social construction and meaning of race in South Africa are not sufficiently engaged. Black as a political identity has a particular meaning and carries a certain history in South Africa. To be black is to have experienced oppression, subjugation and dehumanisation in different spheres of life.

These experiences range from the overt racism experienced during apartheid to microaggressions and other subtle insults in social interactions that reinforce the inferiority of black South Africans, intentionally or unintentionally. It also includes media coverage that promotes the idea of blacks as inferior, incompetent, infantile or to be pitied, and historical accounts that minimise the collective group's contribution to the country's development.⁶⁷

Socially it means that those who are black are more likely to have poor quality education, live far away from work, earn less, and experience a higher burden of disease and psychological trauma. Thus, to be black in South Africa is to experience multiple stressors from the environment, social interactions and individual life conditions, and to exist with untreated or unacknowledged intergenerational trauma.

Despite this, the interplay of self and world, of biography and history, of the individual and society⁶⁸ does not feature enough in analyses of why certain forms of violence happen in the communities that are studied. The result is that there is implicit normalisation of the racialisation of VAW and VAC.

For example, in VAWC 4 there is an implicit normalisation of the perception that it is black men who rape, while in VAWC 5 the idea that race influences involvement in risky behaviours is normalised.

VAWC 38, VAWC 41, VAWC 43 and VAWC 57 note that poor black men are likely to be the perpetrators of violence, without engaging with how the individual characters interface with economic exclusion and a history of marginalisation.

VAWC 29 also supports the idea that IPV is linked to race and socioeconomic status, but the nuances of these ideas are not critically engaged. Only in VAWC 6 and VAWC 9 is the idea that those of a certain race and status are more likely to perpetrate violence challenged.

The tendency to not acknowledge race also leads to researchers not grappling with their own positionality in relation to the communities studied. Researchers tend to apply positivist approaches to research where the intention is to keep researchers objective to the context being studied.

The research process used is, therefore, extractive – researchers construct the research process, determining what needs to be asked, how it will be answered and answering the questions.

Research in the sector remains uncritical of power imbalances between researchers and the communities researched, even when the research itself challenges patriarchal power imbalances that privilege heterosexual men and adults. The dominance of positivist research approaches in a sector addressing a problem so embedded in society's structures and systems of power is troubling.

Silences around structural violence

While most studies identify patriarchy as a system of domination, as well as the need to address the systemic nature of patriarchy, they do not critically engage with the notion of structural violence.

Most research is done in rural areas, townships and informal settlements. However, researchers do not appear to engage with the history of these places as sites of oppression in South Africa. Yet, anchored as they are in a capitalist economy and a history of spatial inequality, this has an impact on how life is experienced in such places, and on the programmes or interventions being evaluated.

The violence of the South African capitalist economy that is racialised, produces inequality, limits human autonomy, hamstring the capacities of individuals and communities, pollutes the environment, castigates the poor for being trapped in poverty, and so on, scarcely gets meaningfully interrogated in the problem representation.

Studies such as VAWC 34, VAWC 12, VAWC 15, VAWC 25, VAWC 33, VAWC 34, VAWC 37 and VAWC 54 refer to the problem of VAWC as being prevalent in poor communities. However, the fact that these locations have become sites where certain forms of violence are reproduced is not sufficiently investigated to reveal how poverty acts as a mediator of VAWC.

It is not coincidental that certain geographical locations are sites where certain forms of violence are reproduced.⁶⁹

Notions of hegemonic masculinity and femininity

Most of the studies in the evidence map present men as perpetrators with will and agency, and women as victims with no agency or will. The language used perpetuates notions of women and men having no histories or complex personhoods who can reason and have emotions.

Men are described as being influenced by early experiences of trauma, community exposure to violence, and gender-inequitable norms to act violently towards women and children, while women and girls are depicted as victims of culture, norms, values and toxic masculinity.

Femininity is depicted as unproblematic and safe or is not really interrogated. In this way, masculinity is problematised and, sometimes with it, manhood and boyhood, but the victimhood of boys and young men and how it intersects with VAWC is not addressed. There were few examples in the studies reviewed of attempts to problematise this dichotomy. VAWC 6 problematises the idea that violence in schools is a problem for boys and an issue of masculinity because it also leads to racist tropes about African boys. VAWC 48 argues that women are not passive victims of abuse while VAWC 57 argues that masculinities are differentiated and not homogenous.

VAWC 9 problematises the notion of singular-causal understandings of violence against women, as there are important differences between domestically violent men. VAWC 17, VAWC 21, VAWC 27, VAWC 35 and VAWC 54 argue that boys and girls can both face victimhood and perpetration, albeit to varying degrees.

VAWC 51 shows the particular vulnerability of adolescent males who are affected by escalating incidences of firearm injuries and deaths of children.

What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?

Emphasis on interventions that focus on families and individual attributes

The framing of violence from the point of view of individual and relational risk factors appears to encourage the design and testing of interventions that focus on addressing family- and individual-level risk factors to violence, rather than structures or systems of oppression.

For example, in VAWC 7 the interventions presented focus on building self-efficacy as a means to prevent dating violence. In VAWC 20 an intervention with juvenile offenders focuses on building self-esteem. The assumption underpinning the programme is that if juvenile offenders' cognitive distortions and defence mechanisms can be addressed, this will help them understand behavioural triggers and develop insight into their offending behaviour.

VAWC 39, VAWC 46, VAWC 57 and VAWC 58 stress the need for interventions that increase the individuals' sense of control over their lives and develop strategies to reduce violence in their relationships.

The need for education, empowerment and awareness-raising through life skills curricula, community dialogues on sexual violence, and skills building is also stressed in VAWC 7, VAWC 5, VAWC 18, VAWC 24, VAWC 26, VAWC 31, VAWC 38, VAWC 39 and VAWC 46.

Unclear articulation of how to address wider socio-economic systems

Although most of the interventions tend to focus on intra- and interpersonal risk factors to violence, we also found instances where researchers have challenged this norm. Some of the studies did question whether a focus on individual risk factors alone is sufficient. For example, VAWC 24 acknowledges that though resilience is individual, individuals need both individual agency and social support to sustain them during and after a decision to leave an abusive relationship.

VAWC 25 also recommends interventions like IMAGE, which empowers women by improving critical awareness, participation, control over resources, and collective decision making. It also helps to challenge gender norms and beliefs, bolster gender equity and reduce HIV risks and violence, in order to sustainably address women's health.

VAWC 26, VAWC 28 and VAWC 30 emphasise the importance of conditional cash transfers and microfinance. However, the limitations of these approaches and their potential to compound socioeconomic inequality and deprivation have been noted.⁷⁰

Other studies (VAWC 34, VAWC 43, VAWC 45 and VAWC 57) focus on the need to build social cohesion and collective efficacy through structural interventions that can confront the complex risk environment underlying high rates of IPV and HIV in Southern Africa.

However, even when there is an attempt to address structural violence, the studies narrowly focus on programmes designed as 'VAW' or 'VAC' interventions. They do not explore solutions that lie in other government-implemented programmes/services aimed at achieving women's economic empowerment, or those that aim to address poverty, such as privileging women in government procurement processes, housing provision, free basic education, etc.

Limited research was also found on the effect of government programmes designed to address the poor physical environment in townships and informal settlements, such as informal settlement upgrading programmes and urban management.

Emerging appreciation of transdisciplinary interventions

We found several studies that invoked the need for transdisciplinary interventions (VAWC 29, VAWC 30, VAWC 31, VAWC 32, VAWC 45, VAWC 52 and VAWC 53) because of the realisation that there can be no single solution to the complex problem of VAWC. For example, VAWC 31 calls for building partnerships to create synergy across the health and development sectors to generate practical interventions.

VAWC 32 recommends having donor agencies encourage inter-sectoral partnerships that can foster synergy and broaden the health and social effects of economic interventions such as microfinance. Though these studies were a minority, their arguments and recommendations recognise the complexity of violence and offer a way to think of complementary interventions to support traditional VAW/C interventions from different sectors of governance.

Reiteration of the need for policy

The silence about limited capacity to implement public policy and the disappointing performance of policies in realising social change leads authors to recommend policy and legislative changes as a way of addressing VAWC. We found several recommendations for strengthening policies and systems. This could show the influence of donors (i.e. researchers feeling the need to say certain things to please their funders) or the need to demonstrate the policy relevance of the work done.

However, these recommendations have not grappled with institutional failure to implement existing policies or explored what else could be needed to improve responses to VAWC.

Some of the studies have acknowledged that the work to prevent and respond to violence is difficult and that those who do this work need support. For example, VAWC 44 suggests that child sexual abuse workers should be guarded not only against compassion fatigue but also against system fatigue – the result of fighting to do good work in an unworkable yet inescapable system. VAWC 20, VAWC 22, VAWC 29 and VAWC 44 also recommend featuring empathy more prominently in programmes.

Rethinking interventions with men

The problematisation of hegemonic masculinity by some scholars, identified in the previous section, reveals the need to rethink interventions with men. For example, VAWC 9 recommends moving beyond intervention efforts that draw too heavily on just one dimension of men's identities (that of 'perpetrator'). This also raises the need to design culturally appropriate interventions with marginalised men.

One way identified by the authors is through more in-depth life-history methods that aim to fully unpack how the disadvantage and brutalisation men have experienced may be linked to their violent behaviour. This understanding can be used to effect a positive transformation of men in IPV interventions.

VAWC 21 recommends that future health programming should engage more directly with men's unique narratives and fears. Programming that is invested in the intersections between masculinities, gender equality and health is also suggested, as such programmes can bolster engagement with men by drawing parallels between the reduction of racial and gender inequalities.

VAWC 13 recommends adopting collaborative learning and non-blaming approaches. VAWC 32 stresses the importance of engaging the broader community, including men and boys. VAWC 57 recommends working with couples and/or peer networks as a way to promote greater gender-transformative change. VAWC57 also argues that working to introduce alternative masculine identities that resonate and are accepted in the symbolic contexts remains an important task in building more effective interventions.

How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended?

To answer this question, we analysed the NSP for GBV and femicide. We looked at which studies were referenced in the NSP and the degree of overlap between the NSP reference list and the studies we reviewed. None of the studies we reviewed were referenced in the NSP.

It is unclear why research that presents evidence of interventions that are effective in South African communities has not been referenced in the NSP. The NSP does, however, reference work done by at least 11 of the researchers who authored articles included in our analysis. This shows the influence that the researchers in our sample have on a national policy.

An analysis of the NSP for GBV and femicide reveals that some of the challenges and limitations in research that we identified in this report have not been adequately addressed in policy. A positive development in the NSP is the inclusion of children in a strategy addressing GBV, even to a limited extent. This is an important start in responding to the intersectionality of VAW and VAC.

The NSP also highlights the importance of economic empowerment programmes for women and addressing some of the structural limits to women's participation in the economy. Lastly, the NSP stresses the importance of violence prevention, and the implementation of evidence-informed programmes to prevent violence.

However, confusion in the use of language and concepts remains with many terms being used to refer to the problem. This is even the case in the title, where femicide, a consequence of GBV, is referred to alongside GBV as though they are separate things.

The NSP also does not fully reckon with why the policy implementation gap exists in both South Africa and this sector. This was addressed previously in the Diagnostic Review of State Response to VAWC,⁷¹ which is referenced in the NSP.

Consequently, the NSP reiterates calls for existing policies and legislation to be implemented without addressing the reasons why implementation has not happened. These reasons include lack of financial resources (which will only worsen with the economic stagnation precipitated by COVID-19), limited capacity (in terms of both the number of staff and the quality of capacity within government) and the dominance of conservative beliefs in the public service as compared to progressive legislation that protects women's rights, among other things.⁷²

The other area where the NSP reflects some of the challenges identified in our research is in relation to ways to reconcile the call for harsher criminal justice responses with a complex understanding of how violence is produced and reproduced in South Africa.

Lastly, we observed that the question of men and how to work with men to reduce the perpetration of violence remains unclear in the NSP, which probably reflects the disagreement among role players on this issue.

Discussion

How research framing shapes understandings and responses to VAWC

Shiffman and Smith offer a framework for understanding how political priority on social issues is generated. This framework was applied by Mikilski and Venturini to assess challenges in achieving the prevention of violence against children as a political priority in South Africa.⁷³

According to Shiffman and Smith, political priority is determined by actor power, ideas, political contexts and issue characterisation.⁷⁴ These four factors work together to influence political prioritisation. While actor power and political context are important indirect determinants of how a problem becomes a priority for politicians, here we consider only how ideas and issue characterisation of VAW and VAC have developed in South Africa.

Ideas refer to the ways in which those who are concerned about an issue understand and portray it. Two factors are important here. The first is the internal frame, i.e. the degree to which the policy community agrees about the definition, causes, and solutions to the problem. The second is the external frame, which is how the issue is portrayed to a broader audience for it to resonate, especially with political leaders who control resources.⁷⁵

On the internal frame, our study found that a number of often overlapping terms are used to describe VAW and VAC. Overarching terms describe the violence in relation to who is the victim, i.e. VAC, VAW, VAWG and to an extent GBV.

Within these broad categories, terms are used to differentiate between the different forms that violence takes, i.e. physical violence, emotional violence, rape, sexual violence, sexual harassment, spanking, etc. Lastly, there are terms that indicate the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, such as IPV, stranger rape, etc.

The multiplicity of terms is inevitable as researchers grapple with the problem and attempt to understand it better. At the same time, this multiplicity and the speed at which new terms emerge can have practical challenges.

For example, Jewkes noted how, when different understandings of IPV are applied, this affects how the phenomenon is measured.⁷⁶ The challenge of a multiplicity of terms not only affects how and what researchers measure but also the ability of the public and policy audience to understand what is meant.

For example, over the past year, the term GBV has become ubiquitous in South Africa and may obscure or become euphemistic (as was the case when actress Thandeka Mdeliswa was shot and her family referred to it as an act of GBV, to obscure what was difficult to speak about, and at the same time elevate the importance of her death).⁷⁷

Further, the evolution of gender as a continuum calls into question the future usefulness of definitions that rely on gender binaries and may lead to the marginalisation of violence against non-cisgendered people. The proliferation of concepts can also alienate those politicians and policy actors whom research aims to influence. We found that although there is general agreement that VAWC is a problem, researchers' understanding of the problem of violence is shaped by their discipline and the theoretical framework they employ. Even those who apply a public health approach are not able to apply all the lenses and recognise all the intersectionalities in a single study.

Each piece of research looks at the problem from a particular perspective, e.g. VAC is viewed from the perspective of the parent-child relationship; IPV from relational perspectives, from male subjectivities or a legislative perspective. Each study recognises the limitations of studies that have not shared its focus, while, in turn, making the same error of essentialising a perspective.

Transdisciplinarity is venerated but seldom applied, though we found a few studies that actively called for transdisciplinary research.

The consequence is that while the multiple risk factors or drivers of violence are identified and made apparent, not enough consensus (or knowledge) exists about how the risk factors work together to produce violent behaviour. The tensions that exist between different explanations of causes are not always resolved.

Compounding the problem is the formulaic nature of public health publications that tend to be short and concise, leaving little room to sufficiently unpack these complexities.

The implication is that though the nuances between the different terms, concepts and theoretical perspectives might be well understood among researchers, policy adaptation, which is a much slower process than research, can be left behind. This makes it difficult for those working with policy to develop a coherent way to talk about the problem – or how to respond to it.

As Stevens argued, policymakers are often looking for clear narratives about what the problem is, how big it is, why it is a problem and what should be done to address it.⁷⁸ In South Africa, this is further complicated by the tensions between those who advocate for more primary prevention versus those who argue that the evidence that primary prevention works is too weak at present, and see the solution in a strong and effective criminal justice response.

This can be seen in the NSP, where the plan is all-inclusive, making everything a priority and thereby providing no clear logic of how violence will be reduced.

In short, considering the studies reviewed, the multiplicity of concepts and the frameworks applied, it is a significant challenge to develop a coherent narrative that is convincing for both policymakers and communities.

In relation to how VAWC is portrayed, there are still areas where there are contestations and a variety of beliefs about violence. Some have argued that what is considered violent, and which violent behaviour is considered most damaging, remain open for debate.⁷⁹ For example, are rape, verbal abuse, economic abuse and spanking equally harmful, or is there a hierarchy of harm?

What criteria should be used to rank or prioritise forms of violence, when the severity of the violence and its effects seems to vary significantly between instances?

It is this question that has led some researchers to question the neglect of high rates of male homicide (particularly young black males).⁸⁰ Others also question the focus on certain forms of violence, particularly forms of violence that are considered criminal.⁸¹ To make matters worse, the answers to these questions may depend on one's discipline and reason for studying violence.

In addition, some communities have disagreed with certain definitions of violence. For example, in the case of *Christian Education South Africa vs Minister of Education* in 2000, Christian schools argued that corporal punishment was an accepted practice in their religion, not a form of violence that should be disallowed. As a result, they viewed Section 10 of the School's Act of 1999, which bans corporal punishment in schools, a violation of their Christian faith.⁸²

In 2019 a similar argument was brought forward by Freedom of Religion South Africa. In this case, the Constitutional Court ruled that parents' defence of moderate and reasonable chastisement was constitutionally invalid.⁸³

The second category in Shiffman and Smith's framework that is relevant to this analysis is issue characterisation, which is defined as a feature of the problem. This includes credible indicators – clear measures that show the severity of the problem and that can be used to monitor progress. The second factor considered is interventions – the extent to which the proposed means of addressing the problem are clearly explained, cost-effective, backed by scientific evidence, simple to implement, and inexpensive.⁸⁴

On severity, researchers rely on the scale of the problem and the material effect it has on society, and on women and children, to draw attention to the problem. Police data is often used to show the magnitude of the problem, with a caveat that reported cases are much lower than actual incidences/prevalence.

In 2015, KPMG released the *Too costly to ignore* report measuring the costs of GBV in South Africa.⁸⁵ This was followed by a Save the Children report on the cost of VAC.⁸⁶ These reports have been used to illustrate the impact of the problem and the cost to society.

Thus, on corporeal forms of violence, there do seem to be consistent ways in which the problem is being measured, though there are areas of contestation. The latter have to do with boy children and their experiences of sexual violence, how that is measured and characterised. It also has to do with men's experiences of violence, if they represent legitimate victimhood and therefore how to respond to that.

There are also some areas still not widely studied that include the experiences of minorities such as women with disabilities, gender non-conforming individuals, lesbians, etc.

Another area of contestation relates to the magnitude of the problem when compared with other problems. South Africa simultaneously experiences problems of economic stagnation, unemployment, poor housing and high levels of violence.

It is within the discussion about other forms of violence that there has been contestation about whether VAW and VAC are the most critical problems. For example, of the 21 325 murders that happened in South Africa in 2019/20, 2 695⁸⁷ victims were female, who were mostly victims of their partners or men they knew, while most victims were young black men.⁸⁸

Despite black communities' being the focus of most studies,
there was little engagement with race and racism and
its impact on communities

Our analysis suggests that research on VAW and VAC has not sufficiently positioned VAWC within the context of other forms of violence.

Therefore, the relationships between different forms of violence are not adequately addressed, and shared risk factors are not identified. Except for studies that applied the cycle of violence or a sociological view of the problem, VAWC is often conceptualised, researched and addressed without adequate consideration of how the country's context shapes individual behaviour and choices.

Issue characterisation also includes ameliorative interventions. This is the extent to which the proposed means of addressing the problem are clearly explained, cost-effective, backed by scientific evidence, simple to implement and inexpensive. The interventions that were described or evaluated in the studies considered here were clearly explained, tested and, in most cases, found to be effective (in addressing particular risk factors for violence) or had mixed outcomes.

This finding is likely to be a result of publication bias, whereby papers that report positive outcomes are more likely to be published than those reporting negative findings.

Most of the interventions analysed did not include a breakdown of costs, or an estimation of what it would cost for the intervention to be scaled up (or even what items or factors would need to be considered in a costing), since most were tested by NGOs in a limited number of communities.⁸⁹

Although the body of research does provide knowledge about the effectiveness of particular programmes to address a combination of risk factors for violence, there is a lack of clarity about what combination of interventions is needed and at what 'dosage', to address multiple vulnerabilities and have a stronger impact on preventing violence. This is, arguably, one of the constraints that those who drafted the NSP on GBV and femicide faced when making decisions about what should be prioritised.

What influences the framing of the problem?

Global frameworks

Our research found that the public health approach has had a significant influence on how the problem is understood. There was extensive referencing of international bodies like the WHO and UNICEF. We also observed partnerships between global North and South African researchers in testing programmes and writing up results.

Our research is not able to assess power distribution in the research teams. However, Girvan argues that the asymmetry of power between global North and global South countries can be found in the dominance that Northern centres derive from their huge resources, their role as international centres of intellectual innovation, their close relationship with funding agencies, and the intellectual socialisation of Southern decision-makers.⁹⁰ This potentially gives global North-based researchers significant power and influence, which cannot be underestimated.

Who is studied?

Although most research reports and publications are prefaced with statements about how VAWC occurs across socioeconomic status, race, age and religion, it is notable that most interventions reported were implemented in poor black communities (African and coloured).

Poverty is most often mentioned as a mediator of violence and therefore provides the motivation for studying these communities. However, we noted the absence of interventions tested in other poor communities, i.e. poor Asian communities and poor white communities. This probably raises questions about which communities are more accessible for study and experimentation and which are not, and which are more acceptable as subjects of study.

Despite black communities' being the focus of most studies, there was little engagement with race and racism and its impact on communities in the reviewed studies. This resembles the 'race-blind interpretations of social phenomena' drawing on mainstream ontologies and methodologies that are often poorly equipped to understand how race operates.⁹¹

When race is mentioned it is as if it describes a natural feature of an individual or community and not a social construct that carries particular meaning in the South African context. Similarly, when racial subjugation is mentioned it is often mentioned in the past, referring to apartheid.

The importance of racism as a system of oppression that continues post-1994 is largely absent from analysis. The impact of racial oppression on individuals and communities is understated. Yet much of South Africa's life is interpreted through a racial lens, even when the interactions are between black people.⁹²

The communities studied are also not always comprehensively contextualised and tend to be defined by deficits. Their cultures, values, ways of life, dreams and resilience are discounted by the focus on what they do not have. Descriptions of such communities focus on levels of poverty, unemployment rates, the absence of fathers (or male-headed households), etc.

This perpetuates the infantilisation of poor black communities where they are portrayed as incapable of participating in the transformation of their conditions.⁹³

Yet these research sites are places where life happens, where children are born and raised, where community members co-parent, share resources, attend church or mosque, find hope and continue to be resilient despite high levels of strain. By focusing on what the communities do not have, research supports the idea of importing solutions.

Solutions to high levels of violence are often looked for outside of those communities, as seen in a number of studies where interventions were first tested in high-income countries and adapted for South Africa. This creates challenges of the sustainability of interventions, as well as challenges when interventions are not culturally sensitive – a problem a few papers acknowledged.

An important observation is that the choice of who to study runs the risk of racialising violence, where violence is seen as a problem of black people, particularly black men. This probably feeds into existing stereotypes and the continued othering of black men.⁹⁴ As such, society then treats violence by other males as exceptional and violence in black communities as the norm.

This also entrenches the idea of a violent black male that shapes how other institutions deal with black men. Examples of this are private security or street policing committees profiling black men in ‘privatised’ public spaces, violent policing of black neighbourhoods⁹⁵ epitomised by the call for the army to intervene in communities ravaged by drug and gang problems,⁹⁶ and police ministers encouraging ‘tough on criminals’ police responses.⁹⁷

It is unlikely that black communities will stop being objects of studies on violence. However, research can engage with these communities with more nuance. Researchers need to critically engage with race – how it affects the individuals studied, as well as their interpretation of what is observed and how it affects the potential interpretation of the communities that are researched.

Asset-based research approaches could be a useful way to understand the resources that exist in communities and instances of positive deviance could be a basis for understanding what is likely to be effective and sustainable in communities.

What is studied?

Most of the research reviewed focused on corporeal forms of violence. Studies on VAW tend to focus on physical violence, sexual violence and, to a limited extent, economic violence. For VAC, the focus is also on sexual violence, particularly that experienced by girls, physical punishment/spanking at home and corporal punishment in schools.

While the choice of what is studied is pragmatic, as these forms of violence are more visible, it can be limiting. In this way, researchers could also be shaping the notion that certain forms of violence are more important than others, even though researchers do acknowledge that other forms of violence could be just as damaging.

Unwittingly, this risks contributing to the minimisation of the non-physical impacts of violence, such as psychological trauma.

Representivity in authorship

Our research found that most of the study authors, particularly first authors, are not black. This is despite the fact that most of the communities that are studied are black. This is not to say that research teams did not include black researchers. It is most likely that where research required primary data collection there would have been data collectors who are black, familiar with the context and who speak the local language.

These black research assistants, enumerators, fixers and intermediaries play a critical role in data collection because their identity and knowledge of local custom enable access to research sites and subjects, yet their work is often concealed in the outputs of the research.⁹⁸

These data collectors have easier access to communities and are probably better at building rapport with research participants. However, it does not seem that their participation in the research process is pulled through into the data analysis and sense-making process, or into the interpretation of the evidence that happens through further publications.

Ratele argues that the study of human behaviour is not value-free. Both the subject of enquiry and the researcher are social actors.⁹⁹ Therefore, inclusivity in research teams and authorship is not merely about reaching racial transformation as conceptualised by the government through schemes such as black economic empowerment (BEE). It should be about diversifying the voices contributing to the process of interpreting findings from research.

Those with an intimate understanding of the communities being studied are more likely to be able to contribute insights that come from direct experience of the cultural practices, traditions and practices of communities and their embeddedness in histories of racism, inequality and being on the sharp end of structural violence.

Skewed publication

Most of the publications included in this analysis are articles in academic journals. (We did not consider whether the journals or articles were open access, even though we know that open access publication comes with its own costs that researchers in the global South often struggle to foot.)

Journal articles are primarily targeted at academic readers rather than programme implementers in NGOs, policymakers in government, or the public. Few authors reported whether the ideas presented in the academic publications had been used to inform policy, but it is widely acknowledged that informing policy is not the primary objective of academic publishing.

This raises questions about the extent to which knowledge about programmes that hold promise for preventing violence in South Africa is being shared widely enough to inform public discourse and policy debates. This is an interesting question considering that none of the research studies reviewed in our study was referenced in the NSP on GBV and femicide.

It also raises questions about whether the measures of performance or success for knowledge producers, particularly those in academic settings (e.g. number of peer-reviewed journal articles), are appropriate for a developmental state.

Areas not widely explored

A couple of studies pointed out spatial or environmental risk factors associated with sanitation facilities as increasing the risk of women and girls experiencing sexual violence in low-resourced areas. Such arguments are helpful because they point to policy areas where the government can intervene to reduce vulnerability to sexual violence.

We noted that few studies researched the effectiveness of environmental interventions on VAWC.

Interventions studied also tended to focus on the violence happening between individuals in relationships, i.e. IPV, domestic violence, dating violence, violence perpetrated by caregivers, etc. This could be because these are areas where there is promising evidence of effective programmes.

We found little to no research on interventions that address trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, child pornography, child trafficking, paedophilia, etc. There was also no research that focused on interventions to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace.

This leaves open questions such as whether there are connections between these forms of violence, what happens within intimate relationships and in poor communities, and why no interventions have been tested to address these forms of violence.

Unresolved contestations

Intersections of different forms of violence

Our analysis suggests that different forms of violence intersect. However, these intersections remain largely unexplored or inadequately explored.

The intersection between VAW and VAC, has until very recently, not been widely interrogated. Most of the studies reviewed focused either on VAW or on VAC. This is true even in cases where researchers acknowledge that children who experience VAC are likely to experience other forms of violence and grow up to be perpetrators or victims of violence.

Not engaging with the intersections of VAW and VAC leaves gaps in how policy responses are framed, with the two sectors often working in parallel. The inclusion of children in the NSP on GBV and femicide is an important start.

However, it needs to translate to programming and funding if it is to impact practice. To do that there are issues that need further discussion and clarification, including instances where women are perpetrators of VAC but also victims of VAW; and where there might be a conflict between the rights of children and women's rights, etc.

Most studies acknowledged that violence is complex and the result of structural factors and systems of oppression, e.g. patriarchy, yet most interventions focused on addressing risk factors at individual and relational levels. Few also focused on community level-risk factors.

Interventions for perpetrators tended to focus on criminal justice responses, while interventions with women tended to focus on empowering individual women to make different decisions regarding violent relationships. This could be because most of the papers focused on programmes that were designed by researchers and tested in communities, and very few measured the effect of interventions implemented by government.

Those interventions that aimed to address economic conditions tended to be limited to cash transfers or micro-finance for women and did not connect with the broader interventions being implemented by the South African government to restructure the economy.

Most of the studies we analysed acknowledged that the violence happening in homes and interpersonal interactions has to be understood within South Africa's history of state-sanctioned violence. It is a consequence of generations of subjugation of black communities and the failure of market-based policies to economically transform South Africa. As such, an act of violence can only be understood by unravelling the (sometimes deep) layers of history in which it is enfolded.¹⁰⁰

The thinking that locates acts of violence within a historical and cultural context does not seem to translate to how interventions are structured. Interventions tend to focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal risk factors of violence.

There is a disconnect between the complexity that is often acknowledged in the introductions to studies and in their literature reviews, and the presented interventions and recommendations. Though few studies also concluded with reflections on limitations to current interventions that do not address the structural determinants of violence in South Africa. This is a promising development.

So, it remains unclear how South Africa is to deal with the psychosocial legacy of apartheid if it is a key contributor to levels of violence.

How does the presence of violence that is considered legitimate shape attitudes and perceptions about VAW and VAC?

In addition, many of the interventions do not seem to grapple with the accepted notion that much violence is hidden, and not reported or acknowledged. There is a tendency to focus on more obvious forms of violence such as rape and physical forms of IPV and VAC, such as spanking.

This not only contributes to the characterisation of certain places as locations of violence but also probably misses opportunities to understand the connections between different forms of violence. By seeing some communities as sites of violence, the innovation and assets that exist in those communities might be discounted.

The characterisation of the problem described above carries the risk of enabling a dissociation, whereby

men who are not physically violent but hold sexist or misogynistic views see themselves as outside the problem of VAW.¹⁰¹

In addition, members of society who benefit from exploitative capitalism that keeps poor black individuals earning the menial salaries that trap them in squalor, travelling long distances to work and without the means to protect their children, do not see how this system contributes to high levels of violence in the country.

As a result, big businesses and corporates have not taken their role in addressing violence in the country seriously. They have not seen how they contribute to violence or how they can be part of the solution, and how their success is tied to the country's ability to build a more just and fair society.

Other forms of violence and harm are also not given enough attention. For example, while sexual harassment in the workplace is increasingly receiving attention following the global #MeToo movement, this remains inadequate. Its impact on women's participation in the economy must still be fully explored and responded to.

Lastly, not grappling with intersections creates a problem of language. The categories of victim and perpetrator are not mutually exclusive. Victims of one form of violence can be perpetrators of other forms of violence. For example, a mother who is experiencing IPV can be a perpetrator of VAC, while a boy experiencing violence at home can be a perpetrator of peer-to-peer violence, or sexual violence towards a girl at school.

These multiple identities that arise from the intersections of different forms of violence are not always taken into consideration in research or interventions to ameliorate violence.

The language used creates clear victims and clear perpetrators, making it difficult to see the intersections and interdependencies. This binary makes it difficult to develop a language that allows for the comprehensive, whole-of-society approach needed to address all the risk factors of violence in South Africa.

Is there space in South African society for any form of violence?

We found that most articles in our study did not refer to the interface between criminal and so-called legitimate uses of violence. Dwyer argues that the problem of studying violence (and, one could add, generating political prioritisation for violence prevention) is that the literature concedes that certain forms of violence are legitimate.¹⁰² Therefore, what is violent is defined not by the act itself but by the context in which it occurs.

Dwyer's argument raises questions about who has the right to define the legitimate use of violence. It also brings to the fore the intersections of 'legitimate violence', i.e. public protests that could be considered a legitimate means of being heard and addressing service delivery, and illegitimate forms of violence.

If violence is indeed an act of power¹⁰³ with those wielding it often using their power in ways that are violent (the state through the police, or labour movements, community movements, etc.), does that not normalise the use of violence to resolve social conflict, maintain order, etc.? How does the presence of violence that is considered legitimate shape attitudes and perceptions about VAW and VAC?

The Constitutional Court has ruled decisively that there is no legitimate use of violence within the home or schools, but this has not been extended to other contexts. Historically, violence was used by grassroots movements to challenge the apartheid regime. Violence used in this way remains a powerful tool applied by social movements and, more recently, by some political parties, even if symbolically.

Most of the research analysed tends to argue that VAW and VAC should be considered a problem because of the far-reaching impact they have on victims and society.

Again, Dwyer argues that focusing on the impact of violence brings into question the issue of cultural understanding and remembering of violence. This raises questions about the influence of culture on how the victim or perpetrator understands violence and also on the researchers who shape what is researched.

Therefore, for a country like South Africa that is struggling to free itself from a history steeped in violence against black people in political, economic and interpersonal spaces, should definitions of violence and the

conceptualisation of violence only rely on the impact on the victim or tolerate any form of violence? Does the fact that some forms of violence still enjoy some support in society determine attitudes towards other forms of violence considered illegitimate?

From the analysis undertaken here, it is clear that a more successful approach to addressing VAW and VAC will require South Africa to commit to addressing the damaging effects of all forms of violence – criminal and non-criminal, physical and non-physical, interpersonal and structural.

What to do with men?

A major contestation that seems unresolved in the studies reviewed is what to do with men and, to an extent, with masculinity. Work by Peralta found high levels of spillover violence outside intimate partner relationships. This means that men who reported perpetrating violence against their partner also reported perpetrating violence against acquaintances and strangers.¹⁰⁴ This reinforces the connections between VAW and other forms of violence.

Ratele and Langa also draw attention to how hegemonic masculinity creates young black males' vulnerability to homicide and other harmful behaviour.¹⁰⁵

Questions, therefore, remain about what to do with men. Are men victims of patriarchy or are they benefactors? Are all men victims of patriarchy or just some? Are there men who need empowerment, and could that be a route to end the use of violence? If men can be victims of patriarchy, how should interventions with men be approached? Who is to champion them? How do they work with organisations formed to support women?

From the analysis done, universal notions of masculinity and femininity do not seem to explain sufficiently why certain men are violent or what can be done to reduce the likelihood of men acting violently. A more nuanced understanding of masculinity and femininity – both independently and in relationships – could be helpful in efforts to find interventions that prevent violent incidences.

Public health and criminal justice: Complementary or oppositional?

Most of the studies reviewed that take a public health approach to violence emphasise the need for interventions that are evidence-based, victim-centric and aim to minimise harm. At the same time, there is a strong call for accountability of perpetrators, which requires an effective criminal justice system able to control violent behaviour through effective detective work, arrest, prosecution and sentencing.

The need for a strong criminal justice response has been the most 'heard'. This can be seen in cabinet statements that have emphasised 'harsh on criminals' as a response in addressing structural factors, making certain groups vulnerable to violence perpetration and victimisation.

However, there are clear indications that the South African criminal justice system is not able to cope with the volume of cases of violence, both of VAWC and other forms of violence.¹⁰⁶

Further, with the high levels of violence in South Africa and since physical forms of violence are easier to prosecute, it is likely that young black men in socially disenfranchised communities will end up coming into conflict with the law.¹⁰⁷ This is likely to continue to erode police-community relations and push such communities into a vicious cycle of violence and crime.

In addition, if violence is understood to result from risk factors located within the individual, family, community and society, and most violence is not reported, surely the criminal justice system is not the most effective mechanism to address violence.

Nonetheless, the alternatives for dealing with perpetrators are not clear, partly because less research has been focused on interventions with those who commit violence (though this is changing).

Conclusion

VAWC has attracted a significant amount of research that has contributed to what is known about the problem. A wide variety of approaches are used to conceptualise the problem and study it. This has enriched the understanding of the complexity of the problem. Programmes have been tested for their effect on a range of risk factors for interpersonal violence, and several of these have shown promise. However, gaps and challenges remain.

Firstly, various terms are used to describe violence experienced by women and children. There remains contestation about what is included and excluded in some of the key concepts. An important area of growing ambiguity is the binary-gendered nature of terms or concepts such as GBV and IPV. Another area of contestation is around the victimhood of children. Are boys and girls equally vulnerable to victimisation? Should they be treated the same?

Secondly, although there is some knowledge about which programmes work to address certain risk factors, not enough is known about the combinations of interventions and intensity of interventions needed to address the multiple risk factors that households tend to experience. Also lacking is an understanding of the right sequencing of interventions where people experience multiple risk factors.

Thirdly, research is not always sufficient to connect the different forms of violence and show how they intersect. Importantly, the historical trauma linked to race and racial oppression, and the continuing oppression of poor black communities within a capitalist economy, do not get adequate attention in how the problem of VAWC is represented.

Therefore, the question of how individual factors interface with historical, structural and systemic factors to reproduce violence remains largely unanswered. Interventions then tend to focus on familial and individual risk factors. Considering the high levels of different forms of violence in South Africa, this focus is not sufficient.

Lastly, race is not given adequate attention in the research assessed in our study. This is the case both in relation to why certain communities experience disproportionately high levels of violence and are the subject of study, and in relation to who undertakes research or is acknowledged as contributing to research. There were far fewer black authors than white authors in the studies reviewed.

This raises questions about whether it is legitimate for white authors to shape the discourse around violence experienced primarily by black women (and children) and why the voices of black women are inadequately represented in research. Could what we know about violence change if black women become full participants in the production of knowledge about interventions to prevent violence?

Recommendations

- Preventing violence and reducing its harmful consequences in society needs to be prioritised. The unfolding COVID-19 pandemic threatens some of the gains made in recent years to get VAWC on the political agenda. To avoid eroding these gains, the Violence Prevention Forum (working with other partners) should consider developing a position paper that argues for the continued prioritisation of violence prevention even as South Africa battles the impact of COVID-19. This should include suggestions on prioritising interventions based on the existing evidence base and providing policymakers and implementers with recommendations on the combinations of interventions needed to address multiple vulnerabilities that are likely to be worsened by the pandemic.
- Stakeholders interested in the prevention of violence can benefit from asset-based research knowledge/evidence. Donors and government research-funding institutions should incentivise asset-based research in communities. This means starting from the perspective that communities have resources and capabilities to address challenges, that women and children (and men) can be active agents in designing research questions and thinking about solutions (programme design), but might need facilitation or access to networks and resources that they lack. Programme designers also need to explore ways to work with local institutions that already have established relationships in the community.
- Donors and government research-funding organisations need to incentivise collaboration between South African universities, particularly with the previously disadvantaged universities. The sector will only be enriched by a diversity of views and voices. The absence of institutions that represent, or are most likely located in, the communities that are likely to be studied requires attention.
- Different forms of violence intersect. It is not an effective strategy to try to deal with each form of violence as if it were happening in a vacuum. Therefore, South Africa needs a country strategy to deal with violence broadly. The 2016 White Paper on Safety and Security is a strong starting point. However, to address VAWC it is equally important to address structural violence, including inequality, racism, etc. The Civilian Secretariat for Police should ensure that efforts to implement the White Paper emphasise addressing some of the weaknesses in government programmes that contribute to violence. Restoring dignity needs to be a cornerstone of government policy, be it housing policy, municipal by-laws, social development funding of NGOs or how the police patrol certain neighbourhoods. In addition, partnerships with communities need to be strengthened. The Civilian Secretariat needs to explore how the voice of communities will be brought to the White Paper implementation process and ensure that the process does not privilege government and researcher perspectives. The White Paper might also be a good place to start addressing the effects of South Africa's history. Racism and racial oppression continue to divide the country; the historical trauma of apartheid has not been addressed definitively.
- Researchers (working with CSOs and the government) need to develop frameworks that enable the country to make sense of the different intersections and find a language that makes sense and can be understood outside of academic circles. Currently, different initiatives and efforts are running in parallel, divided by discipline or forms of violence. Efforts to end organised crime, such as child pornography, trafficking for sexual exploitation, male-on-male violence, gun violence, gang violence, GBV, VAC, etc., do not sufficiently identify complementarities and tend to focus on what divides. However, all these different initiatives aim to

prevent violence or reduce harm. Perhaps the ISS can start this discussion between different programmes.

- Researchers need to avoid perpetuating the stereotypes and tropes they argue against. Researchers in the sector (VAW and VAC) cannot continue to apply a race-blind analysis to the problem. The way research is framed, who is studied and by whom, is currently enabling the racialisation of violence whereby black men are deemed as violent and a danger to 'others', wittingly or otherwise. The lines between research interested in reducing violence and activism are blurred. The idea that research can be abstracted from concerns about gender, race, the political economy and other social forces will make it ineffective as a tool for social transformation. Understanding why men behave violently or why parents often struggle to care for and love their children – and what needs to be done to address this – cannot be divorced from issues of power and power asymmetries. Researchers themselves cannot be abstracted from the context they study. This means researchers who are not of a culture they are studying need to be aware of how their own power and perspective shape their analysis and interpretation of evidence. It also means that researchers need to question their own motives for doing research in particular communities. Lastly, it is important to consider how race plays a role in relations within the sector and how research is understood and used.
- Ethical clearance has often focused on reducing harm in the research process. However, ethics committees at universities and research institutes also need to ask developmental questions. It is important to consider broader and transformational questions related to the ethics of doing social research. How, for example, will the research help those who will be interviewed? Is further exploration or testing of programmes in communities warranted? Are there other ways that the knowledge can be generated? How will the research support policy and implementation? How will the knowledge generated be shared with local institutions to strengthen their knowledge of how to respond to the violence happening in their communities?
- More implementation research is needed in the sector. It would help the sector, and particularly the NSP, to understand why there is a policy gap and what factors improve the likelihood of policy being implemented. This understanding should then be factored in when programmes are designed and tested by researchers.

Notes

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